




Speech By  
**Hon. Curtis Pitt**

**MEMBER FOR MULGRAVE**

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Record of Proceedings, 12 November 2015

### **QUEENSLAND PRODUCTIVITY COMMISSION BILL**

 **Hon. CW PITT** (Mulgrave—ALP) (Treasurer, Minister for Employment and Industrial Relations and Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships) (6.44 pm), in reply: The member for Surfers Paradise mentioned his intentions to beef up the productivity review functions of the QCA which came out of the Commission of Audit. The former government had plenty of time to implement a range of measures coming out of the Commission of Audit, but they did not want to prioritise those aspects. They intended to establish a Queensland Independent Pricing and Productivity Authority but they ran out of time, with the Revenue and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2014 not getting through the parliament before the last election.

In relation to clause 23, which we will no doubt go through in the consideration in detail stage, the member for Surfers Paradise raised concerns that a direction could be changed by a minister without anyone knowing about it once the direction had been made to the commission. I can inform the House that, upon receipt of a direction, the commission must publish the ministerial direction on its website. This also extends to a change of direction. I am happy to inform the member for Surfers Paradise that, if the government for whatever reason wished to vary or amend its original direction, this will have to be published on the website for all to see as soon as practicable. So there are no secrets; there is no cloak-and-dagger conspiracy here. There will be reasons for a change of direction given to the commission—due to changing economic conditions or policy developments in other jurisdictions, for example.

The member also asked for some clarification on clause 30(2), which I am happy to provide. Clause 30 states that the commission can undertake self-initiated research and analysis relating to productivity, economic development or industry in Queensland. This clause allows the commission to develop its expertise and knowledge of Queensland productivity, economic development and industry and make this available to the public where appropriate. This could take the form of short research papers, fact sheets or statistical analysis. The commission must advise the chief executive—that is, the Under Treasurer—before publishing any work undertaken under this part. This is a notification requirement only and government approval of the material prepared by the commission is not required. This is a way of ensuring the government is informed of the commission's operations and has access to any research and analysis that may be useful in developing its policy settings.

In relation to the opposition wanting a requirement to publish a draft report for an inquiry, I would refer them to the two directions to the Productivity Commission already—the review into electricity pricing and the review into solar feed-in tariffs. We have required the commission to publish draft reports in early 2016 as part of those directions. The practical reality of this is that it is expected that we will ask the commission to publish draft reports where it is in the public interest to do so, consistent with the overarching objectives of broad consultation by the commission.

The member wants to implement a new target for measuring red tape. We remember the days not so long ago when the former government considered the number of pages of the legislation to be a key measure of productivity. On the one hand, opposition members say they do not want to establish yet another bureaucracy, in their words, but in the same discussion they want to regulate every minor detail and decision of a new one.

The government does not support the proposed amendments put forward by the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, which would give the Legislative Assembly, through a resolution, the power to direct a commission to undertake an inquiry on a matter relating to productivity, economic development or industry in Queensland. The minister responsible for overseeing the commission—myself as Treasurer—should have ultimate responsibility for the referral of inquiry matters as currently drafted in the bill. This does not preclude wide consultation in the lead-up to the referrals, including with the commission, key stakeholders and the public where appropriate. Referrals to the commission need to be carefully considered by the Treasurer on a case-by-case basis, taking into account the resourcing of the commission, given its relatively small staffing and budget profile, and the ability of the commission to add value when undertaking an inquiry. The government is not aware of any other similar bodies that have a referral power from the Legislative Assembly. The examples referred by the opposition are very different bodies from the QPC and have a clear public sector oversight function. I thank all members for their contribution to the debate on this bill, and I urge all members to support it, including the government's amendments.